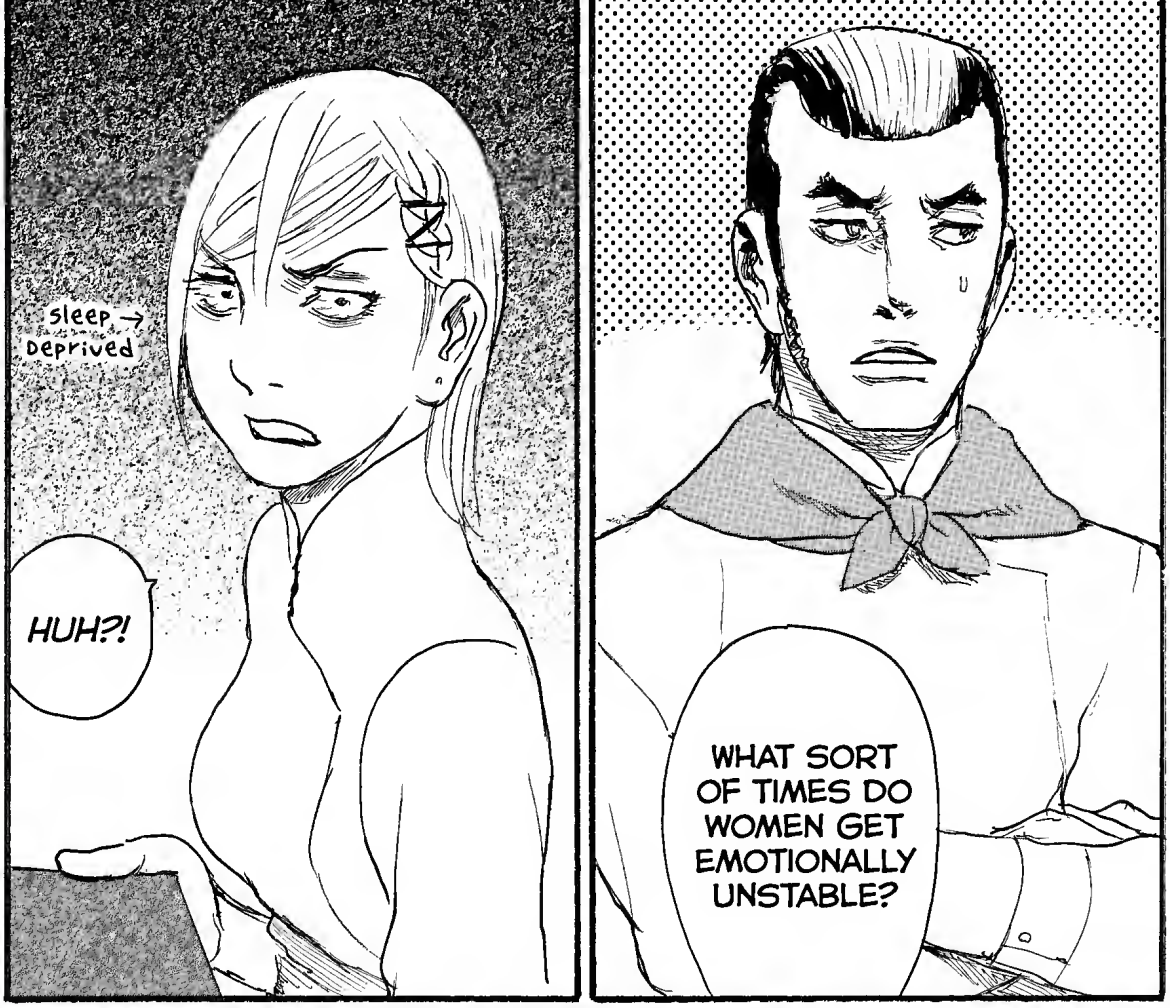
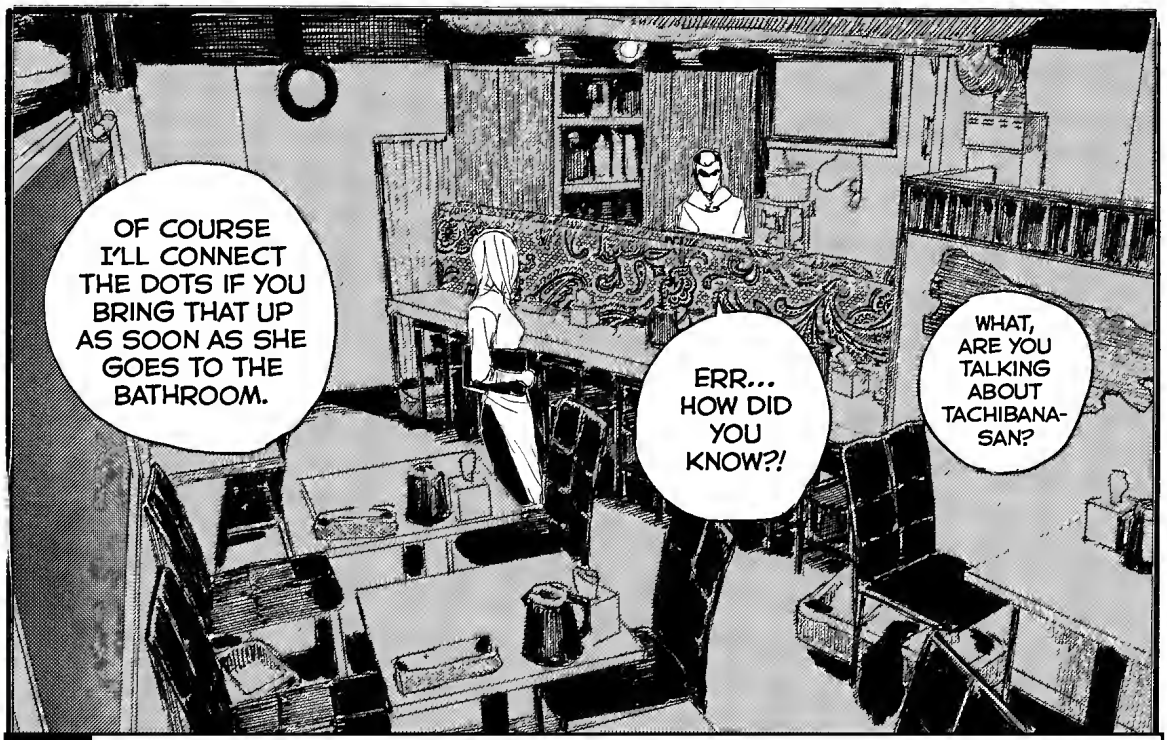
31
Ikenyama kōen
次は西28
LISTEN TO ME!
HIROAKI SAMURA

wave
LISTEN TO ME!
円山公園
Maruyama kōen
次は西28丁目
HIROAKI SAMURA
Chapter 31
「I WANT TO CHASE AFTER YOU.」

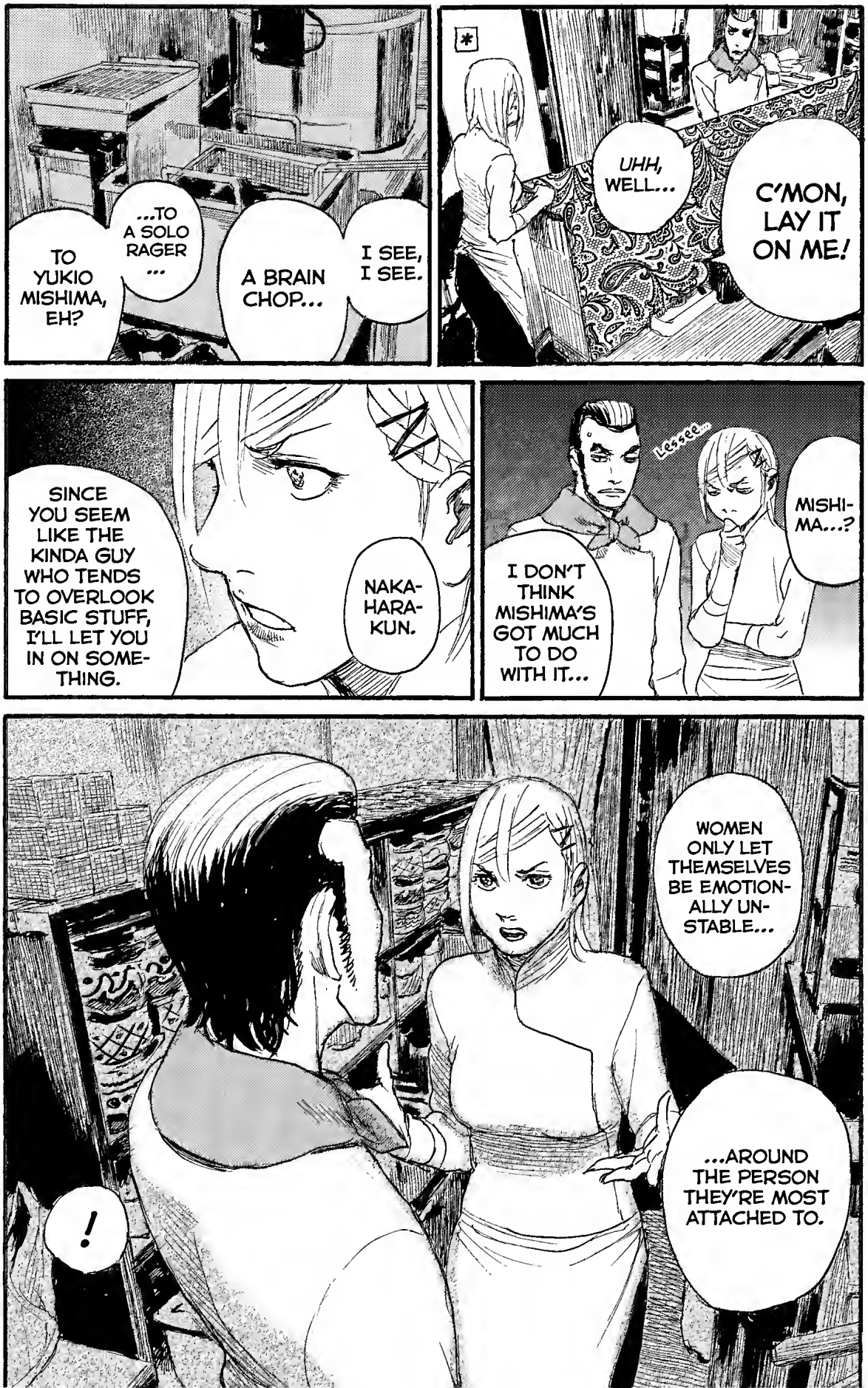
THIS IS A WORK OF FICTION. ANY RESEMBLANCES TO REAL PEOPLE, GROUPS, AND PLACES ARE PURELY COINCIDENTAL.




OF COURSE I'LL CONNECT THE DOTS IF YOU BRING THAT UP AS SOON AS SHE GOES TO THE BATHROOM.
ERR... HOW DID YOU KNOW?!
WHAT, ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT TACHIBANA-SAN?

THE STORY SO FAR

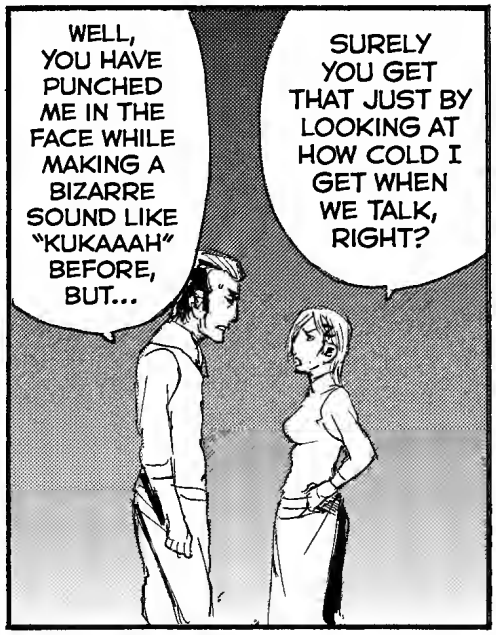
UNDER MATO'S GUIDANCE, THE FM STATION WORKER MINARE KODA HAS MADE HER DEBUT AS A RADIO DJ. BUT COME HER FOURTH SHOW, SHE STRUGGLES TO FIND A THEME AND BEGRUDGINGLY GOES WITH "LIFE COUNSELING UNDER EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES," THE RECORDING OF WHICH ENDS WITH A BAD CASE OF INDIGESTION. MEANWHILE, SCRIPT WRITER KUREKO ANNOUNCES HIS TRANSITION TO A FULL-TIME NOVELIST, WHILE MAKIE WORKS BEHIND THE SCENES TO BREAK INTO A NEW CAREER PATH. CHANGE GRACES THE LIVES OF EVERYONE.


C'MON, LAY IT ON ME!
UHH, WELL...
I SEE, I SEE.
A BRAIN CHOP...
...TO A SOLO RAGER ...
TO YUKIO MISHIMA, EH?
MISHI-MA...?
Lessee...
I DON'T THINK MISHIMA'S GOT MUCH TO DO WITH IT...
NAKA-HARA-KUN.
SINCE YOU SEEM LIKE THE KINDA GUY WHO TENDS TO OVERLOOK BASIC STUFF, I'LL LET YOU IN ON SOME-THING.
WOMEN ONLY LET THEMSELVES BE EMOTION-ALLY UN-STABLE...
...AROUND THE PERSON THEY'RE MOST ATTACHED TO.
!

*A WOMAN WHO SMELLS GOSSIP AND COMES RUNNING.

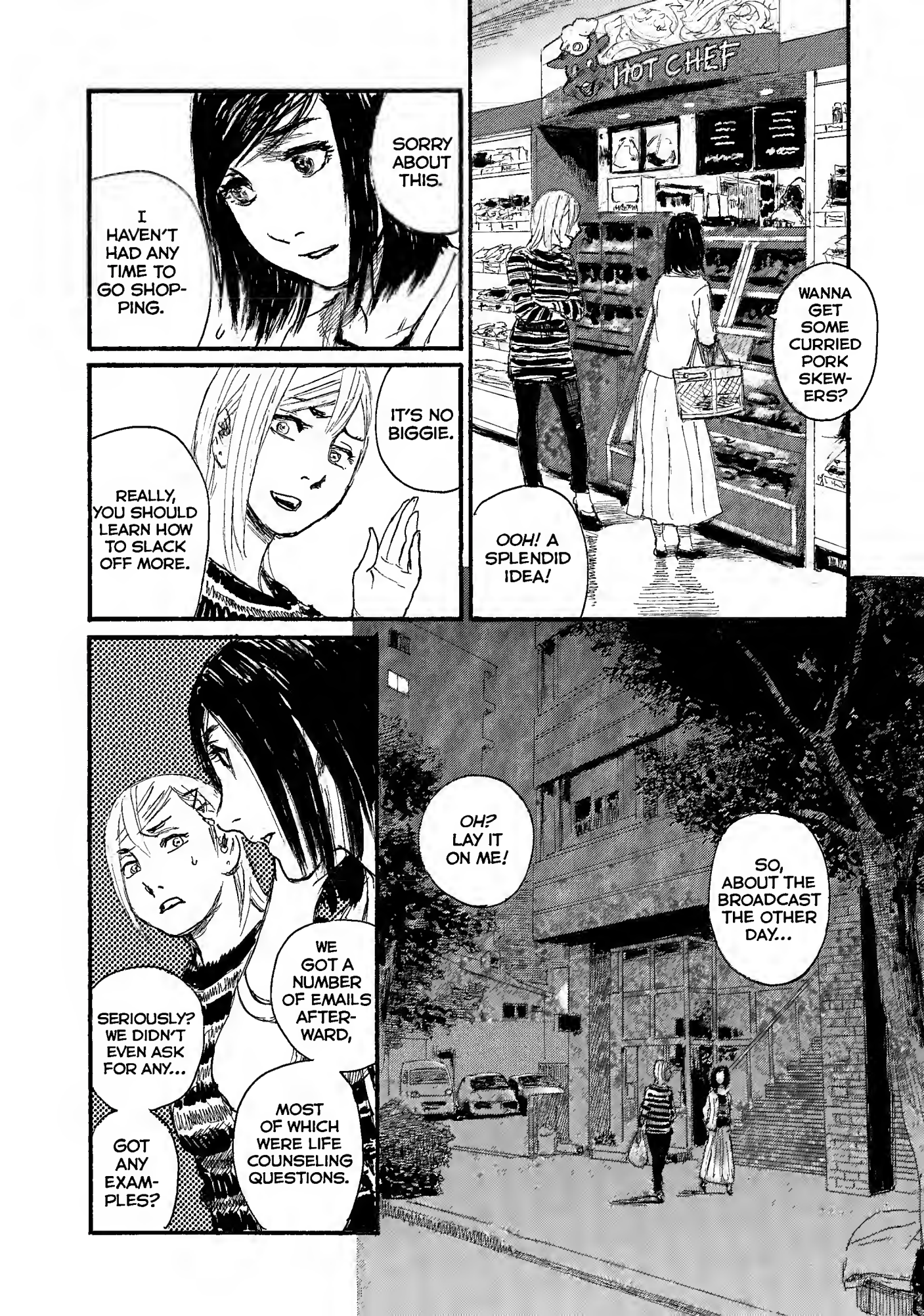
WOMEN WHO DON'T GIVE A FLYING FUCK ABOUT YOU,
WON'T CRY OR GET ANGRY NO MATTER WHAT SORT OF INSENSITIVE STUFF YOU SAY TO THEM.
INSTEAD, THEY'LL JUST BACK OFF AND EMBELLISH THE STORY TO THEIR FRIENDS LATER AND TALK SHIT ABOUT YOU.
THIS IS FEMALE ECOLOGY 101.

TACHIBANA-SAN LIKES YOU.
EITHER GIVE UP ON ME AND APPROACH HER WITH SINCERITY,
OR STOP BEING SO IRRESPONSI-BLY KIND IN A WAY THAT GIVES HER THE WRONG IDEA.


WELL, YOU HAVE PUNCHED ME IN THE FACE WHILE MAKING A BIZARRE SOUND LIKE "KUKAAAH" BEFORE, BUT...
SURELY YOU GET THAT JUST BY LOOKING AT HOW COLD I GET WHEN WE TALK, RIGHT?

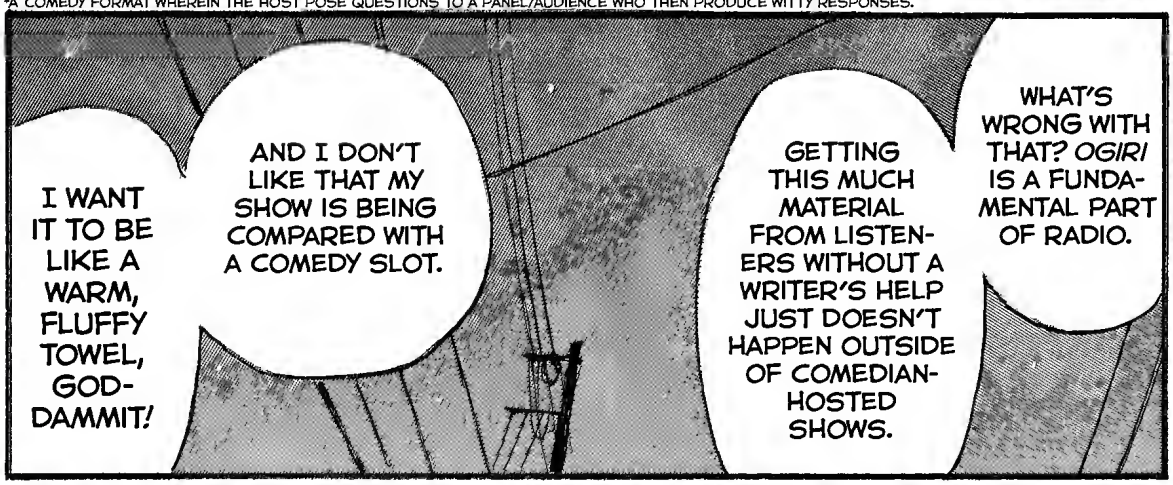
NAKAHARA-KUN...
YOU CAN'T DODGE THE ISSUE FOREVER.

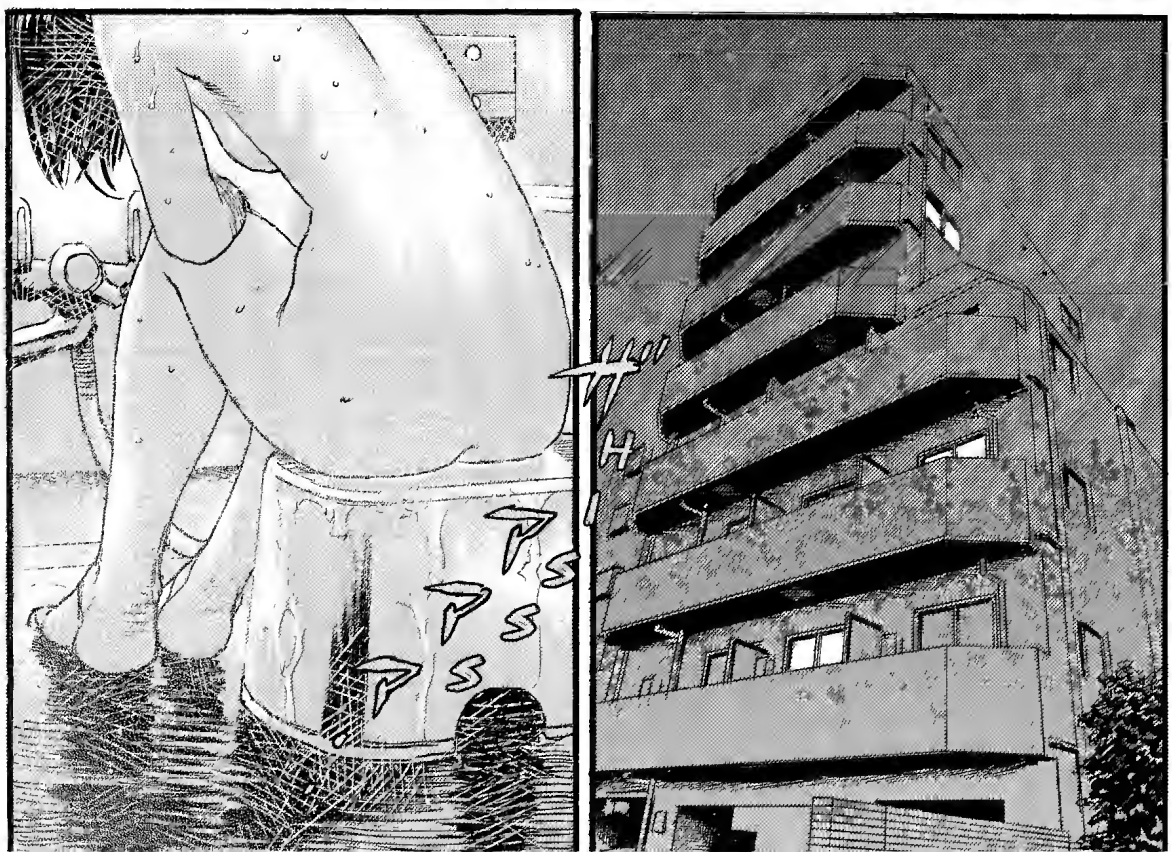
HUH? TACHIBANA-SAN LIKES ME?
HA! HA! HA!
NO WAY! YOU'RE OVER-ESTIMATING ME!
I MEAN, SURE, SHE EXPRESSES HER GRATITUDE TO ME FOR GIVING HER A PLACE TO STAY SOME-TIMES, BUT...
SERIOUSLY? THIS IS THE SAME GUY WHO GETS FULL OF HIMSELF AT EVERY LITTLE THING WHEN HE TALKS TO ME...
Pisses me off...
Seicomart
90% OF BREAK-DOWNS WOMEN EXPERIENCE ARE DUE TO THE MAN THEY'RE TALKING TO!
ANYWAY!
KEEP THIS IN MIND WHEN YOU GO HOME TONIGHT, OKAY?
...? 90% OF WHAT?
NO-THING.
I WAS JUST RUMINATING ABOUT THE RAGE I FELT EARLIER TODAY.


HOT CHEF
WANNA GET SOME CURRIED PORK SKEWERS?
OOH! A SPLENDID IDEA!
SORRY ABOUT THIS.
I HAVEN'T HAD ANY TIME TO GO SHOPPING.
IT'S NO BIGGIE.
REALLY, YOU SHOULD LEARN HOW TO SLACK OFF MORE.
SO, ABOUT THE BROADCAST THE OTHER DAY...
OH? LAY IT ON ME!
WE GOT A NUMBER OF EMAILS AFTERWARD,
SERIOUSLY? WE DIDN'T EVEN ASK FOR ANY...
MOST OF WHICH WERE LIFE COUNSELING QUESTIONS.
GOT ANY EXAMPLES?

"WHEN I PROPOSED TO MY GIRL-FRIEND, SHE RESPONDED WITH, 'CRAB CRAP CHOMP CHOMP.' WHAT EXACTLY DOES THAT MEAN?"
AH, SHIT...
AT THIS RATE, THE SHOW'S GOING TO TURN INTO AN *OGIRI** OF ANSWERING DUMBASS QUESTIONS UNDER THE GUISE OF LIFE COUNSELING...
SOME-THING MUST BE DONE!

*A COMEDY FORMAT WHEREIN THE HOST POSE QUESTIONS TO A PANEL/AUDIENCE WHO THEN PRODUCE WITTY RESPONSES.


WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT? *OGIRI* IS A FUNDA-MENTAL PART OF RADIO.
GETTING THIS MUCH MATERIAL FROM LISTEN-ERS WITHOUT A WRITER'S HELP JUST DOESN'T HAPPEN OUTSIDE OF COMEDIAN-HOSTED SHOWS.
AND I DON'T LIKE THAT MY SHOW IS BEING COMPARED WITH A COMEDY SLOT.
I WANT IT TO BE LIKE A WARM, FLUFFY TOWEL, GOD-DAMMIT!



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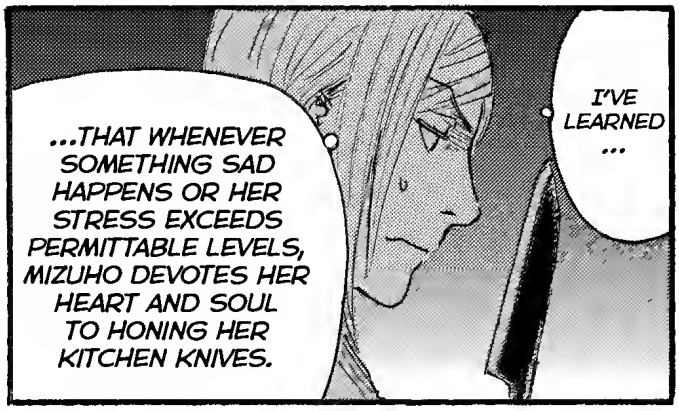
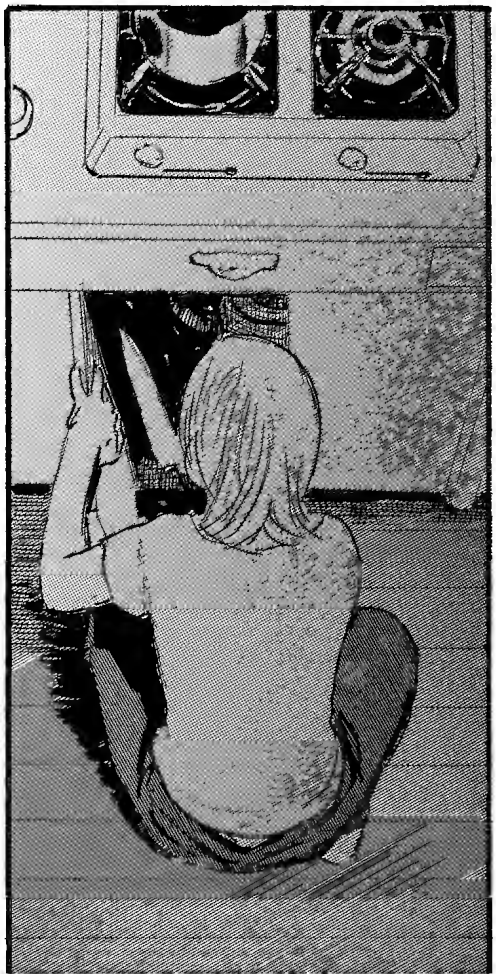

I'VE LEARNED ...
...THAT WHENEVER SOMETHING SAD HAPPENS OR HER STRESS EXCEEDS PERMITTABLE LEVELS, MIZUHO DEVOTES HER HEART AND SOUL TO HONING HER KITCHEN KNIVES.



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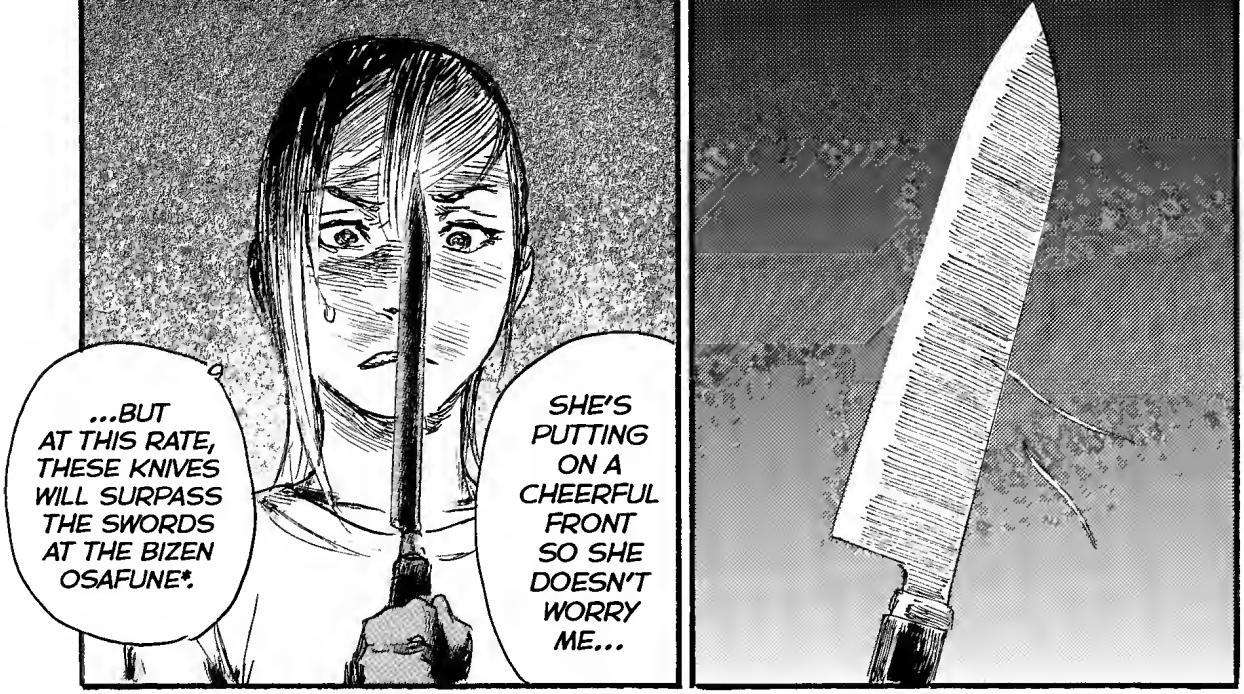
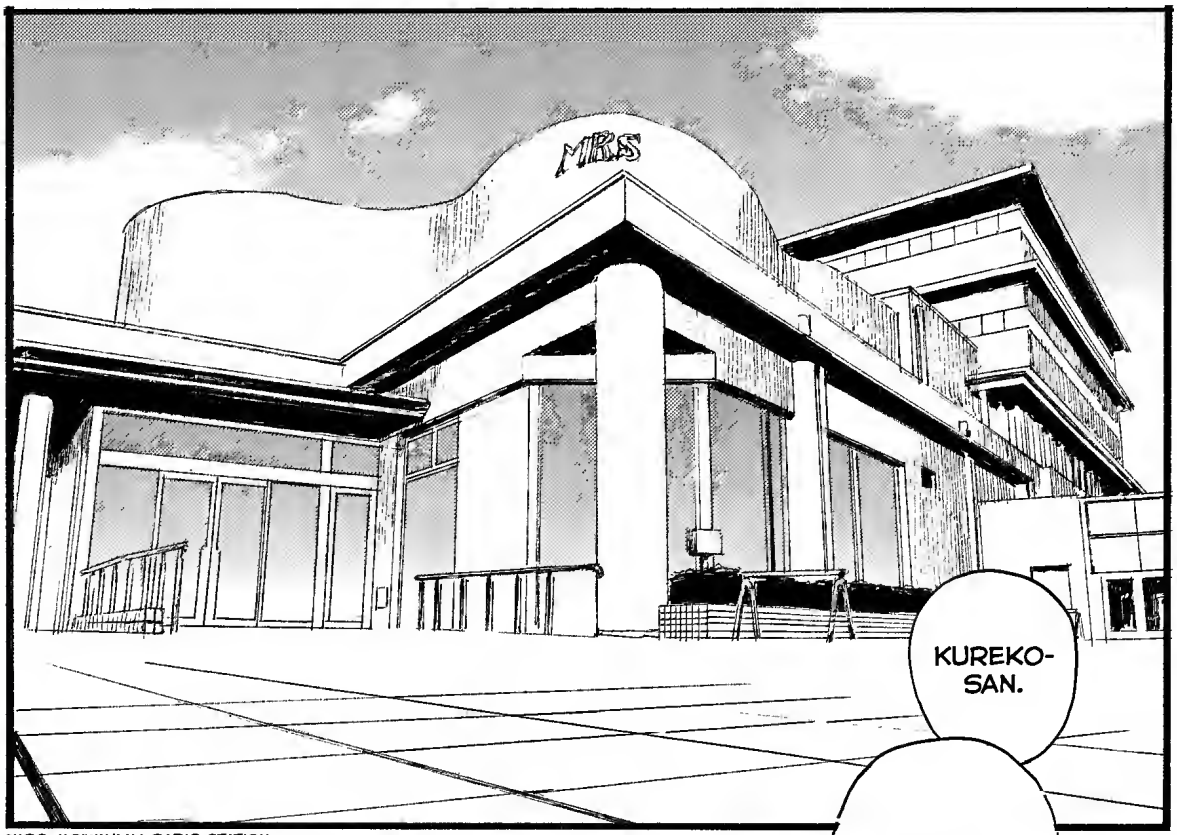

...BUT AT THIS RATE, THESE KNIVES WILL SURPASS THE SWORDS AT THE BIZEN OSAFUNE*.
SHE'S PUTTING ON A CHEERFUL FRONT SO SHE DOESN'T WORRY ME...

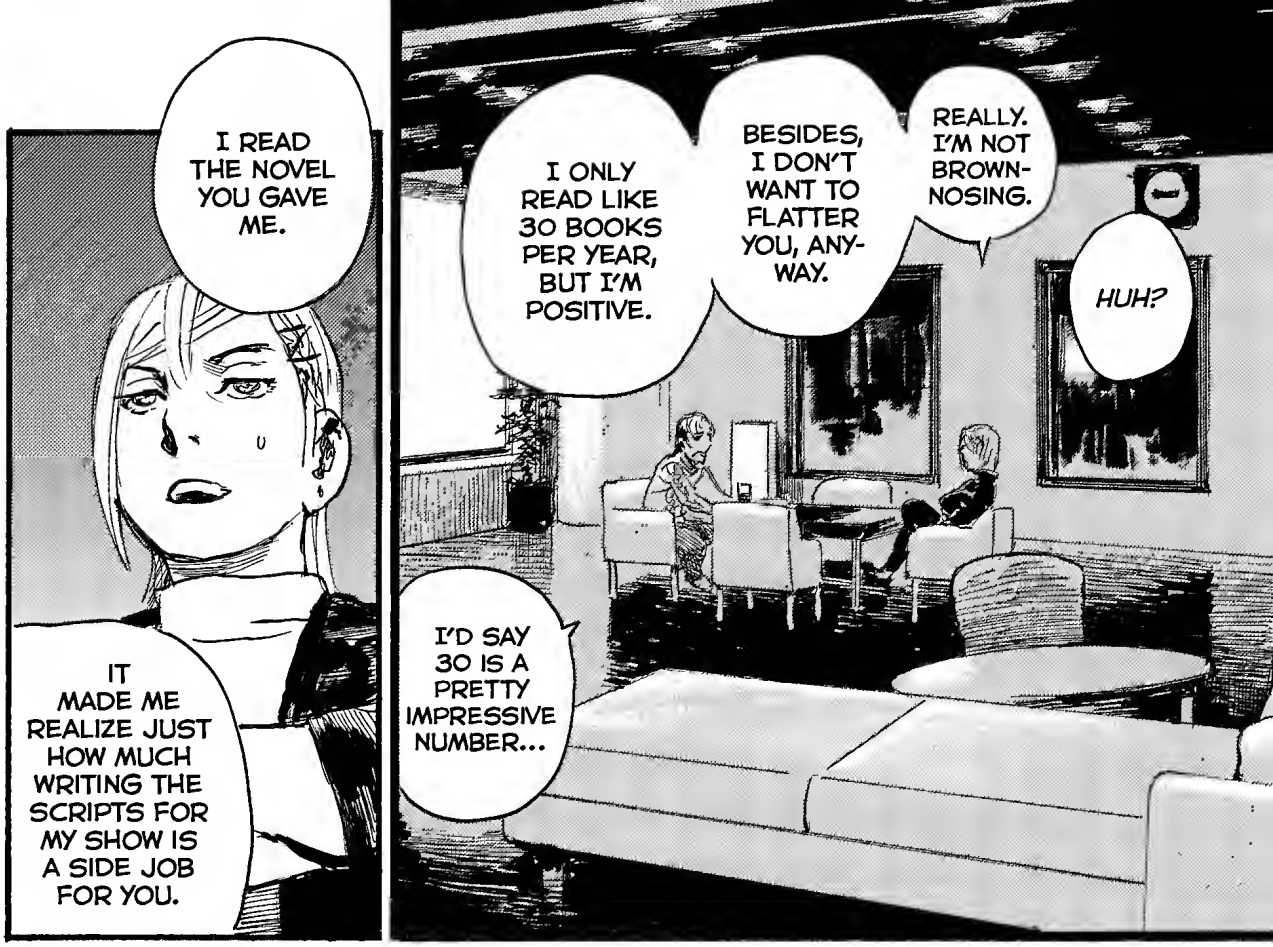
*A MUSEUM OF *KATANA* PRODUCED IN THE BIZEN PROVINCE.

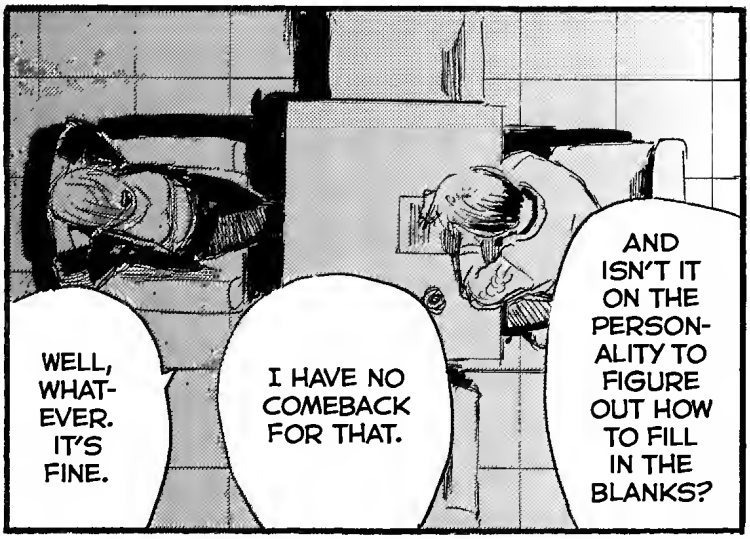


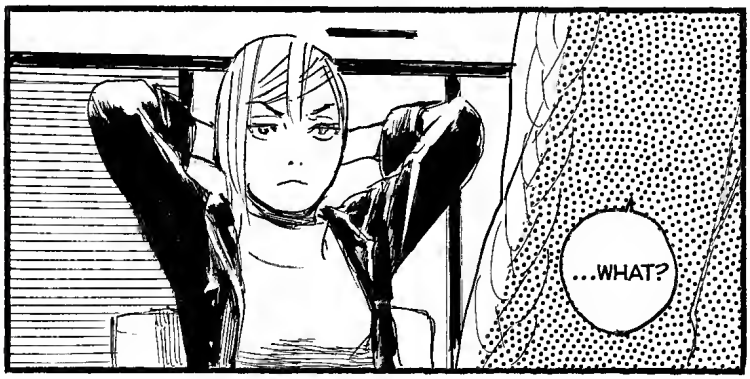
*MRS: MOIWAYAMA RADIO STATION

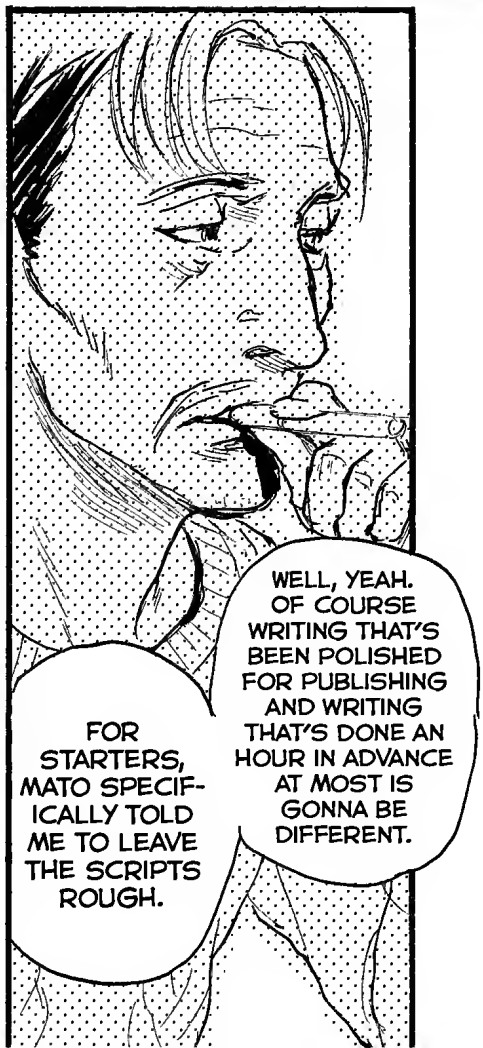
I'LL STOP WRITING SMUT FIRST.
RIGHT NOW, I'M WRITING FOR ONE PAPER AND ONE WEB MAGAZINE. IN TWO MORE PAPER AND ONE WEB PUBLICATIONS, I'LL HAVE ENOUGH FOR A BOOK...
...SO I'LL BREAK IT OFF THEN.
MY CONTRACT WITH THE STATION ENDS MARCH OF NEXT YEAR.
THEY SAID THEY DON'T MIND RENEWING MY CONTRACT IF I DON'T GET THE REWARD, BUT...
AH, SO IT'S STILL A WAYS OFF.
YOU SAID "FAREWELL GIFT" BEFORE, SO I FIGURED IT'D BE SOONER.
I'VE WRITTEN EROTIC NOVELS FOR OVER 20 YEARS UNDER THE PENNAME HISAKI KURE.
I'D LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT, BUT WHO KNOWS?
one due in 30 minutes.
...I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF WRITING A SCRIPT, YOU KNOW.
I GUESS KOBAMSHA'S MANUSCRIPT RATE IS HIGHER THAN PORN MAGS, HUH?
WELL, THE AWARD WORK WILL BE PUBLISHED IMMEDIATELY, AND THE PRIZE MONEY'S HUGE, SO I WON'T COMPLAIN.
BUT IF I DROP THAT PENNAME, THEN I'LL GO BACK TO BEING PAID AS AN AMATEUR.
MY RATE HAS INCREASED OVER THE YEARS,

YOOO! TREAT ME TO PUFFER-FISH, WILL YA?
TEN MILLION?!
WHY SHOULD I...?
JUST SO WE'RE CLEAR, THIS IS ALL IF I WIN THE CONTEST.
HOW MUCH ARE WE TALKING?
TEN MILLION YEN*.
*APPROX. 100,000 USD.
IF EVERYTHING FOLLOWS PREVIOUS YEARS, FIVE CONTESTANTS WILL MAKE IT PAST THE THIRD ROUND,
MEANING I'VE GOT A 20% CHANCE OF WINNING.
OR SO I'D LIKE TO THINK...
...BUT CONSIDERING MY AGE, MY CHANCES ARE PROB-ABLY LESS THAN 10%.
SHIT... I'M NOT MAKING ANY PROGRESS. (GRIPE)
...
NAH...
I THINK YOU HAVE A GOOD CHANCE, KUREKO-SAN.


I READ THE NOVEL YOU GAVE ME.
IT MADE ME REALIZE JUST HOW MUCH WRITING THE SCRIPTS FOR MY SHOW IS A SIDE JOB FOR YOU.
I ONLY READ LIKE 30 BOOKS PER YEAR, BUT I'M POSITIVE.
BESIDES, I DON'T WANT TO FLATTER YOU, ANY-WAY.
REALLY. I'M NOT BROWN-NOSING.
HUH?
I'D SAY 30 IS A PRETTY IMPRESSIVE NUMBER...


WELL, WHAT-EVER. IT'S FINE.
I HAVE NO COMEBACK FOR THAT.
AND ISN'T IT ON THE PERSON-ALITY TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO FILL IN THE BLANKS?


...WHAT?


FOR STARTERS, MATO SPECIF-ICALLY TOLD ME TO LEAVE THE SCRIPTS ROUGH.
WELL, YEAH. OF COURSE WRITING THAT'S BEEN POLISHED FOR PUBLISHING AND WRITING THAT'S DONE AN HOUR IN ADVANCE AT MOST IS GONNA BE DIFFERENT.

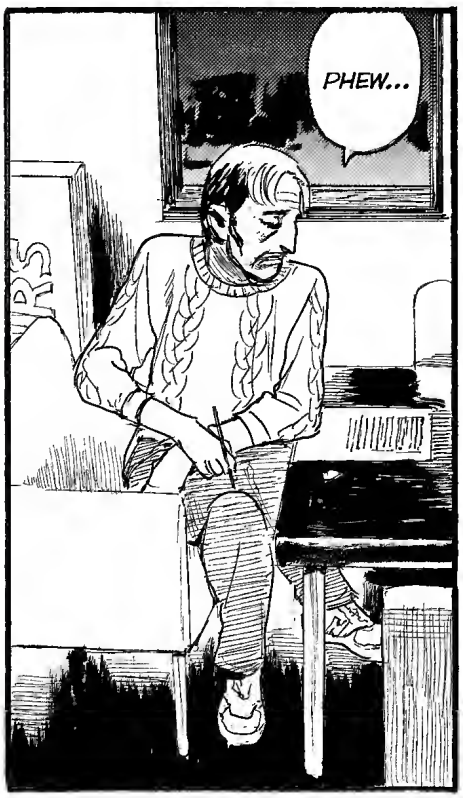
DON'T YOU FEEL GUILTY AT ALL FOR MAKING MIZUHO SAD?
SHE JOINED MOIWAYAMA RADIO BECAUSE YOU'RE HERE.
REAL TALK, HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT MIZUHO?
WOULD YOU AT LEAST SLEEP WITH HER ONCE?
OR WHAT, ARE YOU AND MADOKA CHISHIRO AN ITEM OR SOMETHING?
WHO MADE THE FIRST MOVE?
MINARE-SAN...
HERE.
Take it.
WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR OTHER WORKS UNDER THE NAME HISAKI KURE?
Minister of Defense, Mother-in-Law, Nocturnal Self-Defense
Hisaki Kure
ESF BOOKS
UMM...

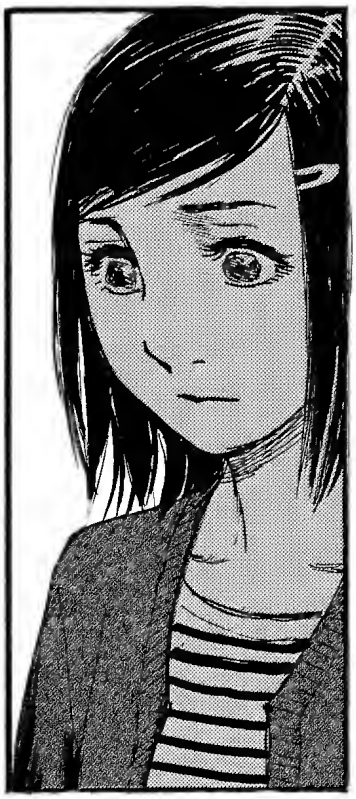
OH, MIZUHO!
GOOD TIMING.
DRAG HER OFF SOMEWHERE, WILL YA?
YOU SHOULDN'T TALK TO A WRITER WHILE THEY'RE WORKING ON A SCRIPT.
NAH, I'M OFF FROM THE STORE TODAY, SO I JUST STOPPED BY ON MY WAY TO THE THEATERS.
WANT TO GO OUT FOR LUNCH?
OR WAIT, WAS THE MEETING TODAY?
すんFWUMP
NOW, NOW, NOW...
?

LET'S DO LUNCH ANOTHER TIME. THE MOVIE'S GONNA START SOON.
WELL, THEN. TOODLE-OO.
KEEP AN EYE ON KUREKO-SAN FOR ME, OKAY?
HUH?! WAIT!
KOMOTO-SAN... DO YOU NEED SOMETHING FROM MIZUHO?
SHH.
!

YOU LIVE TOGETHER, RIGHT?
CAN YOU TRY TO CHEER UP NANBA?
I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK.
FOR A BOTTLE OF ACEROLA JUICE?
FROM ME?
YOU DO?
YEAH, I GUESS I SHOULD'VE EXPECTED THAT FROM YOU. MY BAD.
HM... I SEE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL ME. I'M TRYING MY BEST TO EVERY DAY AS IT IS.
SIIIIGH. KOMOTO-SAN...
IT MAKES IT SEEM LIKE SHE'S FORCING HERSELF...
ACTUALLY, SHE'S BEEN EVEN MORE ON-THE-BALL THAN USUAL.
WHAT, IS MIZUHO THAT DE-PRESSED AT WORK, TOO?

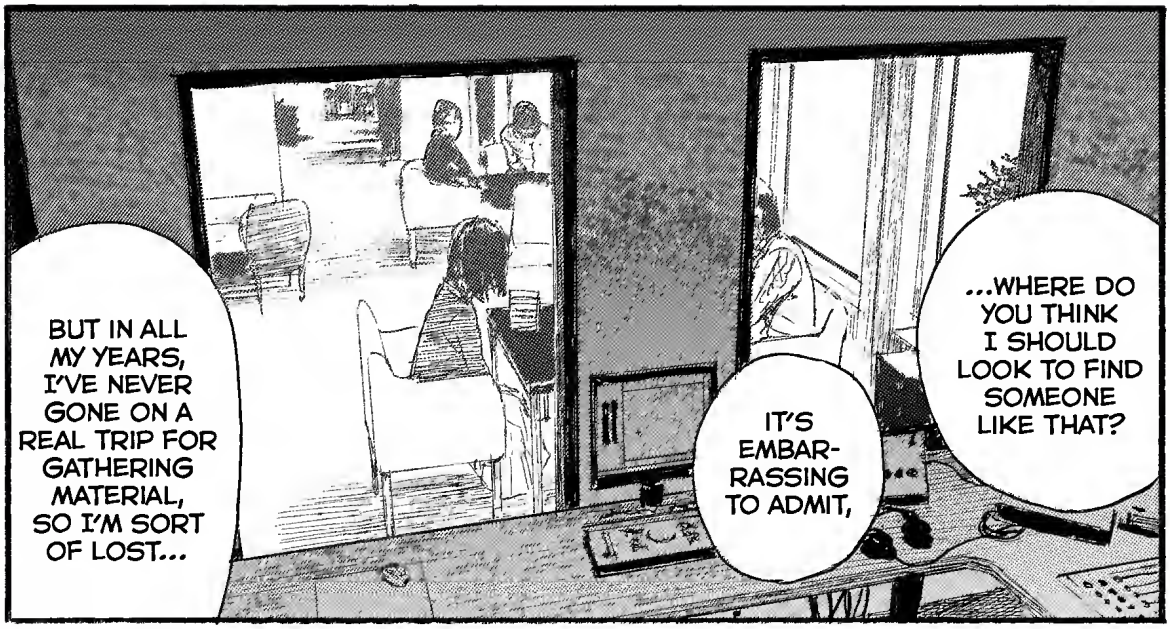
I HEAR YOU USED TO GIVE HER A LIFT HOME ON YOUR MOTOR-CYCLE A LOT.
BY THE WAY,
ACTUAL-LY, A LOT HAPPENED AND...
DO STUFF LIKE THAT FOR HER MORE, WILL YOU?
MIZUHO'S LIKE THIS BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T MAN UP!
STEAL HER? I DON'T THINK THAT HAS ANY-THING TO DO WITH IT...
HOW'D A HANDSOME OUTDOORSY GUY LIKE YOU LET A FRUMPY OLD SMUT WRITER STEAL HER FROM UNDER YOUR NOSE?
HEY! WILL YOU KEEP IT DOWN?!
SHE DODGED YOU WHEN YOU TRIED TO KISS HER AT A SHRINE ON THE WAY HOME ONE NIGHT...
THE SAME DAY I WENT TO WORK WITH THE HOUSE KEY?!
AND NOW SHE WON'T RIDE YOUR MOTORCYCLE ANYMORE?!
WHAT IS THIS CHICK'S DEAL?
I'M SO GLAD I CAME IN TODAY!
AW, MAAAN. WELL, THAT'S THE SORT OF THING I WANTED TO HEAR.
AND AFTER I GAVE YOU A CHANCE TO MAKE A MOVE!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, DUMMY?!
I shouldn't have stopped her...

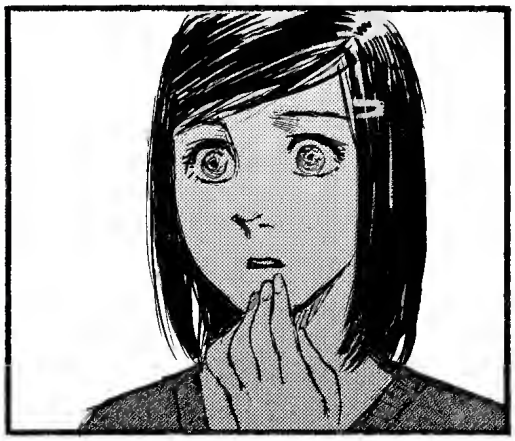

PHEW...



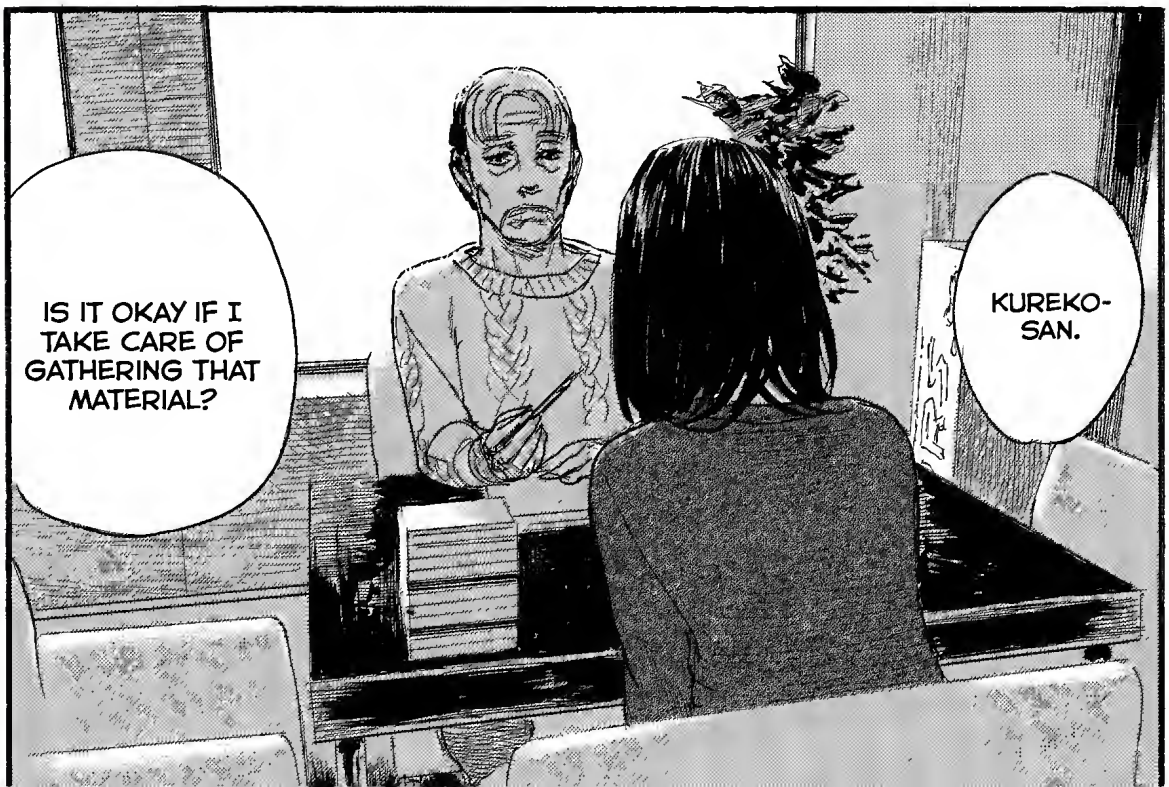
I'VE BEEN THINKING OF MATERIAL FOR A NEW BOOK...
...IF I WIN THE AWARD.
SO, FOR KOBAMSHA ...
Y-YES?!
WELL, IT'S SET IN HOK-KAIDO...
WHAT SORT OF BOOK?
...IN A GHOST TOWN, WHERE A REPORTER IS INVESTI-GATING A CERTAIN INCIDENT THAT OC-CURRED THERE.
LET'S CALL HIM A.
I WANT TO FORMAT THE STORY AS TOLD THROUGH REPORTS WRITTEN BY A,
BUT TOWARDS THE END OF THE BOOK...
...IT BECOMES CLEAR THAT THE LATTER HALF OF THESE REPORTS WERE WRITTEN BY SOMEONE POSING AS A.
THE REAL A DISAP-PEARED MIDWAY THROUGH THE STORY.
...JUST HEAR-ING THAT SPOOKED ME.
THIS DIRECTION ISN'T ACTUALLY ALL THAT UNCOMMON.

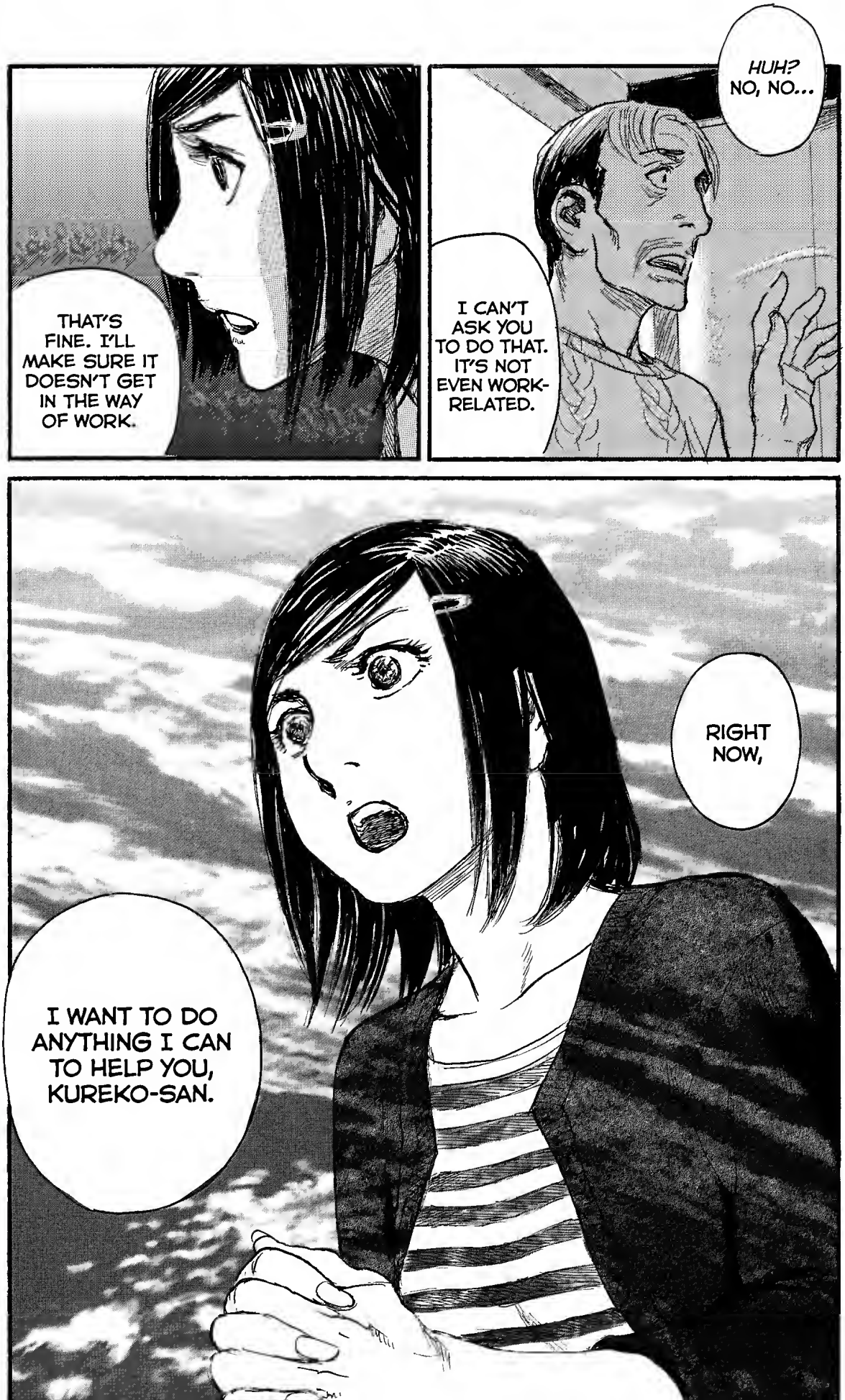
...I CAN USE THE MATERIAL FOR A NEW SUBMIS-SION.
WELL, EVEN IF I DON'T WIN THIS TIME...
BUT I MIGHT NOT HAVE TIME TO GATHER MATERIAL IF I WAIT UNTIL AFTER THE AWARD'S BEEN GIVEN.
I KNOW IT SEEMS LIKE I'M GETTING AHEAD OF MYSELF,
...AND MAKE IT AS REAL-ISTIC AS POSSIBLE.
BUT I WANT TO GATHER REFERENCE ON AN ACTUAL TOWN TO MODEL IT ON...
THE TOWN THE STORY'S SET IN IS FICTITIOUS,
IF I WANT TO HIRE A GUIDE, OR RATHER, A LOCAL TO SHOW ME AROUND...
EVEN THOUGH THE PLACE IN QUES-TION ISN'T A TOURISM SPOT,
HUH?! WH-WHAT IS IT?
SO, LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING, NANBA.


BUT IN ALL MY YEARS, I'VE NEVER GONE ON A REAL TRIP FOR GATHERING MATERIAL, SO I'M SORT OF LOST...
IT'S EMBAR-RASSING TO ADMIT,
...WHERE DO YOU THINK I SHOULD LOOK TO FIND SOMEONE LIKE THAT?



EVEN IF IT'S NOT A KNOWN TOURISM SPOT, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO ASK THE TOURISM CENTER AT THE DISTRICT'S MUNICIPAL BUILDING FOR...
OH... IN THAT CASE,


IS IT OKAY IF I TAKE CARE OF GATHERING THAT MATERIAL?
KUREKO-SAN.


HUH?
NO, NO...
I CAN'T ASK YOU TO DO THAT. IT'S NOT EVEN WORK-RELATED.
THAT'S FINE. I'LL MAKE SURE IT DOESN'T GET IN THE WAY OF WORK.
RIGHT NOW,
I WANT TO DO ANYTHING I CAN TO HELP YOU, KUREKO-SAN.